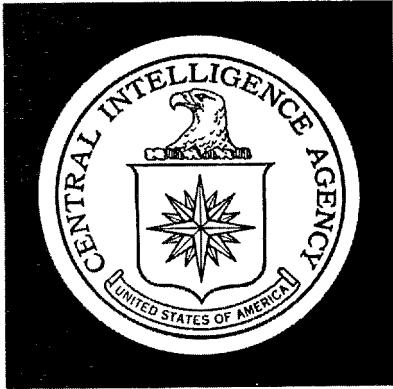


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Afghanistan: Political changes may be impending.
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Afghanistan: Political changes seem to be impending in Kabul.

Rumors that Prime Minister Etemadi wants to resign have heightened the general dissatisfaction with his government's lackluster performance.

Etemadi is not well and has demonstrated a marked lack of enthusiasm for governing. His ineffective response during recent strikes and demonstrations particularly disturbed conservative elements, who have never been convinced that King Zahir's "democratic experiment" would work. The King, who holds the key to political developments in Afghanistan, has tried to remain aloof and let the situation work itself out. He is coming under increasing pressure to act, however, and the US Embassy believes that the chances of his replacing Etemadi are about 50-50, although he is unlikely to abrogate his "experiment" at this time.

No change is likely before September. All political business in Afghanistan traditionally grinds to a halt during August when the country devotes itself to the annual celebration of Afghan independence. [redacted]

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